

**ABSTRACT**

Methods and apparatus are disclosed for defining and using associative memory entries with force no-hit and priority indications of particular use in implementing policy maps in communication devices. In one use, a set of entries is determined based on a policy map with a force no-hit indication being associated with one or more of the entries. Additionally, programmable priority indications may be associated with one or more of the entries, or with the associative memory devices, associative memory banks, etc. The force no-hit indications are often used in response to identified deny instructions in an access control list or other policy map. A lookup operation is then performed on these associative memory entries, with highest matching result or results identified based on the programmed and/or implicit priority level associated with the entries, or with the associative memory devices, associative memory banks, etc.

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